ABSTRACT

Autoethnography has emerged as a relatively new methodological approach within the fields of project management, information technology, organizational behavioral studies, and more broadly within the social sciences. As a reflexive methodology it offers the beginning and experienced researcher a means of critically exploring the social forces that shapes ones involvement in the information technology project implementation process and subsequent the project management experience. In this article the authors discuss the significance of autoethnography as it was utilized to research the experiences of project managers in the enterprise resource planning systems implementation process. The process involved recollecting, writing and re-reading experiences in light of social capital and organizational theories that explore the socio-psychological and cultural aspects within the implementation period of an enterprise resources planning system. The autoethnographic approach used in this article contributes to the emergent methodological literature that embraces the textual or narrative turn within qualitative studies of information technology and project management.

Keywords: Autoethnography, Behavioral Studies, Communication, Enterprise Resource Planning System, Information Technology, Project Management, Qualitative Research

INTRODUCTION

Technology plays a key role in today’s business environment. Many companies rely heavily on information and communication technologies as well as information systems to provide accurate information to effectively manage their business. To excel and a maintain competitive edge in business, it is becoming increasingly necessary for all businesses to incorporate information technology and system solutions to operate successfully. One way that corporations have adopted information technology and systems on a large scale to maintain a competitive
edge is by implementing Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems to accomplish their business transaction and data processing needs (Beheshti, 2006; Finney & Corbett, 2007; Fontana & Neto, 2009; Rothenberger, Srite, & Jones-Graham, 2010; Tsai, Lee, Shen, & Lin, 2010). Such enterprise competitiveness, as outlined by Beheshti, (2006), Finney and Corbett, (2007), Fontana and Neto, (2009), Rothenberger, Srite, and Jones-Graham, (2010), and Tsai, Lee, Shen, and Lin (2010) could be achieved through the use of ERP systems, as they can provide reporting capabilities to management with cost and operational information needed to aid in strategic decisions related to the enterprise’s competitive position.

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems are integrated software solutions used to manage any organization’s resources. These systems not only make resource planning possible, these systems also integrate all departments and business functions of a company into a single computing system that can serve the needs of different departments (Al-Mashari, Al-Mudimigh, & Zairi, 2003; Genoulaz & Millet, 2005; Klaus, Rosemann, & Gable, 2000). Blackstone and Cox (2005), Morton and Hu (2008) along with Elragla and Haddara (2012) described ERP system as a generic term for an integrated enterprise computing system. They define ERP systems as an integrated, customized, packaged software-based system that handles the majority of an enterprise’s system requirements in all functional areas such as finance, human resources, manufacturing, sales and marketing. Such systems have a software architecture that facilitates the flow of information among all functions within an enterprise (Basoglu, Daim, & Kerimoglu, 2007; Jacobs & Weston, 2007). Further, ERP systems attempt to integrate data and processes in organizations. The data is centrally stored in a single database. This database functions as a hub that stores, shares, and circulates data from within the different departments and business functions. According to Jacobs and Weston, (2006) and Slooten and Yap (1999), ERP systems were the first systems to integrate both business management and information technology (IT) concepts. Kumar, Maheshwari, and Kumar (2003) stated that the key underlying idea of ERP systems is using information technology to be able to plan and integrate the software applications and organizational processes such as design, production, purchasing, marketing, and finance. More importantly, Beheshti, (2006) suggest that one of the main drivers to implement an ERP would be the technical and operation integration of business functions to harmonize the information stream with the material flow of goods or services. This will happen through integrating the internal value chain of the firm (Møller, 2005) and providing a seamless business process streamlining, which could potentially sustain the firm’s market competitiveness and responsiveness (Finney & Corbett, 2007).

While implementing ERP systems, organizational management seek to accomplish business objectives such as reducing costs, making data available in real time, electronically exchanging information with major clients, employing new technologies to keep pace with competitors, and solving process related problems (Beheshti, 2006; Finney & Corbett, 2007; Fontana & Neto, 2009; Rothenberger, Srite, & Jones-Graham, 2010; Tsai, Lee, Shen, & Lin, 2010; Umble, Haft, & Umble, 2003). As outlined by Murphy and Simon (2002) benefits are both tangible and intangible, and could be reflective in operational, managerial, strategic, infrastructural, and organizational dimensions in business; specifically, benefits of an improve customer response time, increased interaction across the enterprise, improved interaction with customers, faster decision-making, faster business transactions, facilitate better management, enable e-commerce integration, lower inventory costs, shorter cycle times and global control over distributed business operations (Chou, & Chang, 2008; Davenport, 2000; Maditinos, Chatzoudes, & Tsairidis, 2011; Shang & Seddon, 2002; Soja, 2006; Summer, 2005; Wang, Lin, Jiang, & Klein, 2007). Such perceived benefits and increase in interest have led companies of all sizes to implement ERP systems with these
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